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27

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1881.

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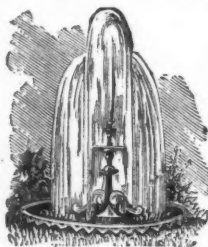
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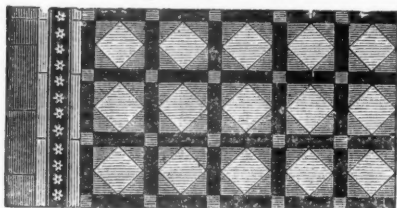
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BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY.

CHAPTER IX. WITHOUT THE CINDERS.

AMONG the "Old Friends" of whom the merciless pedantry of a self-asserting scientific school has done its best to deprive us, and whom one gifted and gentle-hearted writer has nobly restored and rendered doubly dear, clothed in the graceful garments of her own poetic and pathetic fancy, Cinderella is the Old Friend that interprets girlhood most faithfully. The others are delightful, each in its several way; the Giants and their Jack, and Jack and his Beanstalk with all their associations of ambition and enterprise, difficulty, danger, doughtiness, and victory; but they are after all men's stories, and so is Beauty and the Beast, for it is the outcome of a sense of property-laws, and the enormity of trespass, quite foreign to women. But Cinderella is a woman's story, with its little miseries and its big prize, its daily worry, and its puissant help from without. The small contends against the great, the weak against the strong, but not after the manner of the Jacks and the giants, only vicariously, and by the indirect aid of compassion and love. It is a pitiful story too, full of malice and meanness, and when we think of Cinderella, up to that blissful moment at which the fairy godmother bethought herself of her obligations, it is with positive pain. And yet Cinderella's plight might have been a worse one, had there been no cinders. Life with the wicked niggardly stepmother, and those ugly sisters with the big feet, would have been far more intolerable in genteel idleness in the parlour, with unlimited opportunities of nagging

and oppression, than it was in the kitchen with pots and pans to be scoured and the cinders to be riddled. Cinderella was not crushed out of the power of enjoying the ball, and of instantaneously detecting the admiration of the prince, just because she had no time for sentimental grievances. If she was more materially miserable, she was in less danger than a Cinderella without the cinders.

There were none for Helen Rhodes to riddle; there were no actual physical hardships in her life; and nevertheless it was a hard one, and full of the smouldering elements of harm. She was in a position which no one with any knowledge of human nature in general, and girl-nature in particular, could fail to recognise, regarding it from all sides, as dangerous.

Helen had begun her new life with Mr. and Mrs. Townley Gore with mixed feelings; her first instinctive repugnance and misgiving had yielded to some extent to the steady remonstrances of Jane Merrick, and to the equally steady ignoring of them by Miss Jerdane. That new life had had its brief period of delusion. The mere exterior of things surprised and dazzled the school-girl, to whom the big drawing-room at the Hill House had hitherto been a standard of elegance and luxury, and a visit to a museum or the Crystal Palace the event of a season. The house, its furniture, its appointments, the ways of it, afforded her a keen pleasure for a while; and the strange sense of emancipation from one set of rules, even although she was perfectly prepared to submit to another, had a charm for her. There was something completely outside of her imaginings in the orderly activity of a household whose heads lived entirely for the purpose of

pleasing themselves, and she speedily recognised how unlike the reality were the notions which she and Jane had entertained about what Helen was going to do. She had entered upon her new life fortified by the aid of her only friend's steady good sense, and resolved not to expect too much, or to expect in the wrong direction. Jane had, however, no particular knowledge on which to base her counsel, but only a general philosophy which was beyond her years. At the same time she privately thought it was impossible but that these grand rich people must admire and love Helen when they came to know her, and that Helen would soon find herself in the easy and little onerous position of an adopted daughter. But the help and strengthening which Jane afforded her were useless in the utterly unforeseen circumstances of the case. The period of pleasant surprise, of almost bewildering strangeness, was a brief one, and then Helen's life settled down into a long ache of hopeless unhappiness; the unhappiness of an entirely unloved existence. There were times when she used to think she could not be more unhappy; but she was wrong in that. She would have been more unhappy had she known what were Mrs. Townley Gore's real feelings towards her. The girl took them by their outward symbols for indifference and disdain; and when she realised this she suffered from it as only sensitive and dependent natures can suffer, and all the more that at first she had been dazzled and fascinated by Mrs. Townley Gore. The handsome face, the rich dress, the luxurious surroundings, the suavity of manner, even the smooth low tones of the woman of the world made so strong an impression upon Helen, that if she had chosen to win the girl's heart she could easily have done so, through her fancy. But there was no such stuff in the thoughts of the woman who had disliked the object of her husband's bounty before she ever saw her, and hated her afterwards with strength and pertinacity commensurate with the injury unconsciously inflicted by her.

That injury was defeat. There was in the narrow heart of Mrs. Townley Gore a love of power, Napoleonic in intensity, and which had hitherto found a fair amount of material to feed upon. As a child she had ruled her father, as a girl she had ruled her guardian; and she had, if not completely ruled, at least had her own way with her husband. His ways, his notions of what made life pleasant, and especially

his prevailing principle that life was by all means to be made pleasant, suited her so entirely that she had not hitherto had any inclination to oppose him; but no doubt had ever occurred to her that, if she had seen occasion to do so, she would have been successful. The first check to her self-confidence, the first stab to her pride, the first sting of a jealousy which was none the less keen that it had nothing whatever to do with love, had come from the unconscious hand of Helen Rhodes, and Mrs. Townley Gore hated her. She had not failed to perceive the effect that she had produced upon the girl, but it had in no wise softened her, for she had also perceived as clearly that Mr. Townley Gore expected her to be pleased by the frank though timid and wondering admiration of this young person, whose own good looks were not of a kind with which she desired to be placed in permanent comparison. Now her husband had carried the point against her, without vehement opposition, or the vulgarity of dispute, indeed, but by the simple and quiet assertion of his will, and she recovered the first bit of her lost ground by disappointing that expectation. She dismissed his remarks with quiet contempt, and as she knew him too well to believe that he would carry his zeal in Helen's cause to the extent of compromising his own comfort, she reasonably regarded her defeat as far from final.

Mrs. Townley Gore was perfectly aware that her husband's first intention in the matter of the payment of that old debt, of which his creditor had reminded him so inconveniently, was of a large and liberal kind. He would have had Helen taken home by himself and his wife in as comprehensive a sense of that sacred word as he, in whose life there were no sanctities, could use it; and he would have fulfilled his own share in such an arrangement, being that smaller and comparatively easy share that falls to a man's lot in domestic matters, readily enough. To be kind and courteous to a pretty girl, who would, of course, always be good-humoured and well dressed, and who never could be in the way of his perfectly well-ordered course of life, would not only be no trouble to Mr. Townley Gore, but a pleasant novelty.

From the first his wife had resolved that no such interpretation of his obligations should take effect, and on that point she knew that she could not be beaten. The proverbial cobbler is not more thoroughly "maitre chez lui" than was the handsome

and agreeable lady who had not an intimate friend in the world, and whose dependents hated her. Had her husband suspected her tactics he would have been unable to defeat them; for they were worked by small daily tyranny, neglect, and repression, the quiet malice of contempt and enforcement of the bitter sense of dependence and inferiority. And of all this machinery he had no knowledge. She was plausible, and, he was bound to acknowledge, very sensible in her remarks upon the dangers of a false position, and the duty to oneself, and all others concerned, of preventing mistakes. He had not the courage to say that the position against which she was protesting need not necessarily be false, that they could easily make it true, being childless people with nobody to consult in the present or for the future; that the best way to avoid any misconception would be to render Helen's footing in their house secure. He really was actuated in the matter by a surprisingly near approach to a noble sentiment, and he thought he would say this by-and-by, not just yet.

The art of "whittling," as applied to good impulses, has seldom been more effectively illustrated than in the case of Mr. Townley Gore's acceptance of the trust reposed in him by the dead friend to whom he owed his own life. Miss Austen's inimitable Mrs. John Dashwood did not more skilfully and surely "whittle down" the noble purpose with which Mr. John Dashwood was inspired when his father's death commended his stepmother and stepsisters to his generosity, from a comfortable provision for life to three months' board and lodging, and the carriage of their furniture free to their future home at a safe distance from the country seat, than did Mrs. Townley Gore correct her husband's estimate of what was due to his ward. In the first place, she would not have that term applied to Helen Rhodes. Mrs. Townley Gore, as Miss Lorton, had been a "ward," and she knew what was understood, and very properly, by the word.

"A young person with five hundred pounds as her sole provision is placed in a false position by being called the ward of a man of fortune," she pronounced decisively; "people are led to believe that she has money, and much unpleasantness might result to us, besides injury to the poor girl herself. Suppose a man were to want to marry her, for instance?"

Her hearer could not help thinking that a less extravagant supposition had rarely been advanced in argument.

"How painful it would be for you to have to explain! No; both for your sake and my own, I must protest against that."

When her husband had surrendered upon the main point, she felt that the others were comparatively easy to carry. Helen, as his ward, must have been somebody in the household; Helen, as a non-descript, slightly introduced when introduced at all, and always referred to, when it was safe to adopt that tone, and, of course, in his absence, as a young person in whom Mr. Townley Gore was interested, was nobody.

Firmly determined that the unconscious agent of the defeat which had been inflicted on her should expiate her unintentional triumph as completely as was compatible with retaining even for awhile the benefit of gratuitous food and shelter, and nothing to do for them, as she expressed it to herself with the frank vulgarity to which very elegant persons not incommenced by heart are prone, Mrs. Townley Gore skilfully applied herself to reducing the proportions of that defeat. This was due to her self love, and suggested by the stealthy vindictiveness that formed an element in her character, and which, while counterbalancing caution would prevent it from injuring herself, was dangerous to its object.

Mr. Townley Gore could not have explained exactly how it was, or why, but he was undoubtedly disappointed with Helen. It was not because his wife bored him about the girl, for this she never did, having judiciously dropped the subject after she had carried her first point; and it was not that the girl herself bored him, for he saw very little of her, and was never importuned by or on account of her.

But there was no life in her, her gentleness was timid, almost awkward, despite her air of distinction; she was unreasonably sad. True, she had lost her father, but was not the lecture delivered to Hamlet on that common grief very pat, to the purpose, and of universal application? She really ought not to mope over it, as if nobody else had ever lost a father.

She was very pretty, but her dulness, her want of spirits, her yea-nay acquiescence detracted from her charm.

He said something to that effect to his wife shortly after they arrived in Paris, and she answered with a well-regulated smile:

"I entirely agree with you, my dear; Miss Rhodes is profoundly uninteresting."

From putting words into the mouth of an indolently-minded man to persuading him that he entertains the sentiment they convey, is no great distance for tact to traverse; in Mr. Townley Gore's case that feat was soon accomplished. In his eyes Helen did indeed continue to be pretty, but she became uninteresting; and this was not altogether to the credit of her enemy, or to the blame of her would-be friend. She had a hand in it herself; for she was hopelessly reserved and embarrassed with him on the few occasions when they were together.

These tête-à-tête mostly occurred at breakfast, for Mrs. Townley Gore was seldom present at that meal, and Helen dreaded them very much. She knew that her life would have been very different had her father's friend had the ordering of it; and while it was beyond her powers of discernment and out of her experience to read the character of Mr. Townley Gore, with its mixture of intense selfishness and kindly impulse, its superficial honour and its moral cowardice, she was conscious that to appeal to what was good in that character would be ineffectual.

As time went on he had a pretty strong conviction that the experiment he had tried was not succeeding; but he thought very little about it, and when it intruded itself upon his attention, as it sometimes did, and generally in small ways, he would dismiss it with an impatient reflection on the unmanageableness of women and the superfluity of girls.

Helen's helplessness against her enemy had been brought to a test by an incident which occurred very soon after the arrival of the party in Paris. She had received sudden orders to prepare for the journey with pleasure that so transfigured her, as to make Mrs. Townley Gore regret that she could not leave her behind. She was to see Jane once more; the friend on whose advice she had tried hard to act would learn the whole truth from her; she would learn how every effort had been met with cold disdain, and how the fine house had been no better than a prison, in which the girl lived under a cruel woman's secret despotism. Jane would tell her whether there was indeed any way of escape, and if there was, would find it for her; or if Jane still held that Helen must abide by her fetters, she would help her to bear those conditions on which her father had never calculated, and the mere sight of her would be like home once more. She would

not write to Jane; she would secure to them both the additional delight of a surprise.

For the first day or two after their arrival Helen was so completely overlooked that she might have believed her very existence to have been forgotten, but she was not surprised at that; there is confusion at such times in the most smoothly-rolling households. On the third day she asked Mrs. Townley Gore, just as she was going out for the afternoon, whether she might visit her friend and former school-fellow, Miss Merrick. She had come into the salon, where Mrs. Townley Gore, superbly dressed in black velvet and rich furs, was waiting for her husband, who, as Helen put her question, entered the room from the opposite side. His glance rested with approval upon the striking picture which his wife presented: that day she might have borne comparison with Miss Lorton at twenty very well indeed. She was in her best looks; her dress was thoroughly Parisian, and she was going to visit a very great lady, an exclusive of the Faubourg, of the oldest nobility—even of crusading date—of the entrée to whose house she was not unjustly proud.

"I was wondering what you were going to do with yourself this fine afternoon," said Mr. Townley Gore, addressing Helen good-humouredly; "were you arranging something?"

"I was asking whether I might go to the Rue de Rivoli to visit Miss Merrick, my old school-fellow."

"By yourself? Would that be quite the thing? Had you not better wait until Mrs. Townley Gore has a disengaged day and can go with you?"

Helen's heart sank suddenly, and Mrs. Townley Gore's straight dark eyebrows met ominously in the frown that Helen knew so well.

"I thought," said Helen, timidly but desperately, "that I might go alone in a carriage, for Jane will be very glad to see me, and she is the only old friend I have."

Mr. Townley Gore looked irresolutely at his wife. She said, with cold politeness, "I was not aware that Miss Rhodes had acquaintances in Paris. Pray who is Miss Merrick?"

"She has just told us, Caroline; an old school-fellow, at Miss Jerdane's."

"I heard that; but it is hardly sufficient information. Who is Miss Merrick?"

"She is not—not quite a lady, I suppose," stammered poor Helen. "Her aunt is Madame Morrison, a milliner, and her

uncle is Monsieur Morrison. He sells silks and velvets, I believe."

"I believe he does," said Mrs. Townley Gore slowly. "I think it is very likely he sold the velvet my gown is made of; his wife is my milliner. And Madame Morrison's niece is your friend. It is an unfortunate coincidence, Miss Rhodes, and I regret it. There must have been an ill-judged mixture of classes at that Highgate school. Now"—to her husband—"if you are ready. The carriage has been waiting some time."

She took up her muff and moved towards the door; but Helen followed her:

"What do you mean?" she said. "Am I to go?"

"To go! Are you to go, from my house, to visit a shop-girl at my dress-maker's!—of course not. I must say, Miss Rhodes, I am astonished that you should have thought such a thing possible."

She turned the handle of the door while she was speaking, and threw it open as she uttered the last words. Her footman was on the landing, with her carriage-wraps on his arm.

If Mr. Townley Gore had wanted to say anything to Helen he could not have said it.

Helen stood for a few moments where they had left her, and then burst into an agony of tears. The passion wore itself out after a while, and left her exhausted. Then she rose, went to her room, and lay down on her bed to think. There was only one consoling point in her meditations; she had not led Jane to expect to see her; Jane would not be disappointed. Not a notion of defiance, not a project of disobedience occurred to her; and if this seem incredible, let it be borne in mind that Helen Rhodes had been almost all her life at school. But she took a resolution, and made up her mind to act upon it no later than the following morning. And then our Cinderella, without the cinders, fell asleep, like a child, after her tempest of tears.

THE ORIGIN OF OTHELLO.

SHAKESPEARE founded his tragedy of Othello upon a story contained in the *Hecatommithi* of Giovanni Giraldo Cinthio, a poet and scholar of some eminence, who was born at Ferrara early in the sixteenth century, and for some time filled the post of secretary to Hercules the Second, Duke of Ferrara. The book is an imitation of the *Decameron* of Boccaccio, and although

its title imports that it contains one hundred stories, it really consists of one hundred and ten, all founded upon fact, as the preface to the third edition of the work asserts. The author or compiler pretends that ten ladies and gentlemen, escaping from the sacking of Rome in 1527, or from the pestilence and confusion attendant upon that event, took ship for Marseilles, and during the voyage told stories for the entertainment of each other. An introduction sets forth ten stories concerning the happiness of connubial, the misery of unlawful, love. The work is then divided into two parts, each including five decades of stories. The seventh story of the third decade, which deals with "the infidelity of wives and husbands," recounts the murder of Desdemona.

Desdemona is the only name mentioned in Cinthio's story. He writes of the Moor, the lieutenant, the ancient or ensign, and his wife, "a handsome and discreet woman," without assigning them any names whatever. Of Brabantio no mention is made, although there is general reference to the kindred of Desdemona. Roderigo and Montano, with the other subordinate personages of the drama, are the inventions of Shakespeare, who made material alterations in the story while transforming it into a drama. The poet, indeed, clothed with flesh, and breathed life into, a very poor and imperfect skeleton. The novel is a feeble and ill-constructed composition, narrated in a crude and commonplace manner. From Cinthio Shakespeare really borrowed but a story in outline. He employed it like one pouring gold into a mould of clay; he demonstrated his possession both of inexhaustible resources and admirable judgment. He transformed a rather dull criminal case into one of the noblest of tragedies.

There seems to have been in Shakespeare's time no translation published of Cinthio's book. At any rate, no such translation is now extant. The poet may have been sufficiently acquainted with Italian to gather all he needed from the work in its original language; or from some friend who had studied Cinthio he may have first learnt the history of Desdemona's wrongs. The first translation of Cinthio that is known to exist is by Wolstenholme Parr, M.A., and bears date so recently as 1795. Mr. Parr enriched with essays on Shakespeare and preliminary observations his *Story of the Moor of Venice*, translated from the Italian.

Cinthio, translated by Parr, recites that there was once in Venice a Moor of great merit, highly esteemed by the Republic because of his personal courage and patriotic services. With this Moor, Desdemona, a virtuous lady of great beauty, fell in love, and he returned her affection. They were married, albeit her relations did all in their power to induce her to accept another husband, and they lived together in such peace and concord that while they were in Venice "there never passed between them either word or action that was not expressive of affection." Presently the Moor was appointed to command the troops forming the garrison of Cyprus. This honour greatly gratified the Moor; yet his joy was diminished when he reflected upon the length and inconvenience of the voyage, which he assumed Desdemona would be unwilling to undertake. The Moor was indeed much disturbed in this respect. Thereupon Desdemona enquired of him: "How can you be so melancholy after having received from the Senate so high and so honourable a distinction?" He replied: "My love for you, Desdemona, disturbs my enjoyment of the rank conferred upon me, since I am now disposed to this alternative—I must either endanger your life at sea, or leave you at Venice. The first would be terrible, I should suffer extremely because of the fatigues you would undergo, the dangers that would threaten you: the second would be unendurable. Parting from you would be parting from my life itself." Desdemona reassures him. She bids him not perplex himself with such idle imaginings. She will follow him wherever he goes; though it should become necessary for her to pass through fire, instead of simply venturing upon the water in a safe and well-equipped vessel. The Moor embraces her tenderly as he exclaims: "May Heaven long preserve us in this degree of reciprocal affection."

He settles his affairs in Venice, and having prepared the necessary stores he sets sail for Cyprus with his wife and company, a favourable wind blowing. He carries with him an ensign of amiable appearance, but, in truth, of base and treacherous character. But he had successfully imposed upon the Moor's simplicity and gained his friendship; for though really of very cowardly nature, "yet his carriage and conversation were so haughty and full of pretension that you would have taken him for a Hector or an Achilles."

This knave's wife accompanied him to Cyprus, an Italian, of whom Desdemona was so fond that they passed the greatest part of their time together. The Moor also took with him his lieutenant, to whom he was much attached. The lieutenant was, indeed, often at the Moor's house, dining with him and his wife, for seeing her husband's great affection for the lieutenant, Desdemona showed him every mark of attention and civility, and thereby much gratified the Moor.

Presently the detestable ensign, forgetting his duty towards his own wife, and outraging all the laws of friendship, honour, and gratitude which bind him to the Moor, falls passionately in love with Desdemona. He dares not avow himself, however, lest the Moor should instantly put him to death. Still he seeks "by all the private means in his power to make Desdemona conscious of his love." But she thinks neither of him nor of anyone else; nothing he can do to engage her affections has the slightest effect, she is so entirely taken up with the Moor. Thereupon he conceives that this neglect of him arises from her being "pre-engaged in favour of the lieutenant;" his affection for her forthwith changes to bitter hatred, and he resolves to rid himself of the lieutenant. Further, he determines to destroy the happiness of the Moor. After revolving in his mind a variety of methods, all impious and abominable, he decides to persuade the Moor that Desdemona loves the lieutenant; yet "knowing the Moor's great affection for Desdemona and his friendship for the lieutenant, he plainly sees that unless his deceit is very artfully conducted, it will be impossible to make him think ill of either of them." It becomes necessary for him to wait till time and place afford him a fit opportunity for entering on his wicked designs. Soon the lieutenant chances to draw his sword and wound a soldier upon guard. The Moor punishes the lieutenant by degrading him. Desdemona is much pained by this accident, and often tries to obtain for the offender her husband's pardon. Meantime in the ensign's presence the Moor has observed that he should be obliged at last to restore the lieutenant to his commission, Desdemona had been so importunate on his behalf. The villain perceives that the moment has arrived for him to open his campaign. He begins by saying: "Perhaps Desdemona is fond of his company." "And why?" asks the Moor. "Nay," continues the ensign, "I

do not choose to meddle between man and wife, but if you watch her properly you will understand me." Nor will he, in spite of the earnest entreaties of the Moor, afford any further explanation.

The Moor is much stung by the ensign's words, and endeavouring to discover their meaning becomes exceedingly melancholy. Desdemona renewing her solicitations that he would forgive the lieutenant, the Moor grows angry and terrifies her by the passion of his expressions. "You Moors are of so warm a constitution," she remarks, "that every trifle transports you with anger and revenge." These words but increase the irritation of the Moor. He replies: "Perhaps one who suspects it not may learn that by experience. I will be revenged for the injuries done to me so thoroughly that I shall be satisfied." Desdemona, seeing her husband for the first time in a passion with her, is much terrified and submissively answers: "I have none but the purest motives for speaking on the business, but not to displease you in future, I promise never to speak of it again." The Moor now has recourse to his ensign, who, bent upon the ruin of Desdemona, makes a more explicit charge against her, while affecting an unwillingness to say anything to her disadvantage, and pretending to yield only to the vehement entreaty of her husband. To obtain still further information the Moor assumes a threatening countenance and declares: "I know not what prevents me from cutting out that insolent tongue of yours that has so insolently attacked my honour." The ensign renews his accusations, regretting at the same time that he had not held his peace, seeing the improper treatment his friendly offices had brought upon him. The Moor exclaims in great agitation: "If you do not make me see with my own eyes the truth of what you tell me, be assured that I will make you wish that you had been born dumb."

The ensign now applies himself to complete the ruin of Desdemona by still further inflaming the jealousy of the Moor. Desdemona going often to the ensign's house to pass great part of the day with his wife, the villain had observed that she often brought with her a handkerchief the Moor had given her, very delicately worked in the Moorish taste, and highly valued by them both; he resolves to steal this handkerchief and produce it as evidence against her. She is often in the habit of caressing his little girl, a child of three years old, and

one day, while she is pressing the little one to her bosom, he succeeds in stealing the handkerchief from her sash with such dexterity that she does not in the least perceive him, and he goes away with it in high spirits to leave it in the lieutenant's chamber. He then persuades the Moor that Desdemona has given the handkerchief to the lieutenant. The Moor suddenly asks Desdemona for the handkerchief. She has but just become conscious that it is lost. She changes colour, and runs to her wardrobe pretending to search for it. He leaves her meditating how he can best put both her and the lieutenant to death; and "how he might avoid being prosecuted for the murder." Desdemona seeks counsel and comfort of the ensign's wife, and makes the sobbing confession: "I know not what to say of the Moor; he used to treat me most affectionately; and I begin to fear my example will teach young women never to marry against their parents' consent, and the Italians in particular not to connect themselves with men from whom they are separated by nature, climate, education, and complexion." Meantime the ensign has pointed out to the Moor a woman sitting at one of the windows of the lieutenant's house, "a notable embroiderer in muslin," who, struck with the beauty of Desdemona's handkerchief, was engaged in copying it before it should be returned to her. The Moor, now convinced that Desdemona has given her handkerchief to the lieutenant, and that he in his turn has given it to the "notable embroiderer," entreats the ensign to undertake the assassination of the lieutenant, promising never to forget so great an obligation. The ensign, after much entreaty, is prevailed upon to make the attempt; his reluctance is great, however, for the lieutenant is known to be brave and vigilant. One dark night, however, the ensign waylays the lieutenant, assaults him sword in hand, strikes at his legs with a view of bringing him to the ground, and at one blow succeeds in cutting off his right leg. The wounded man falls, and as his assailant attempts to put him completely to death raises a cry of "Murder!" The ensign flies, to return presently as a crowd assembles round the lieutenant, pretending that he also had been brought thither by the clamour. "Placing himself amongst the rest, and seeing that the leg was cut off, he concluded that though he was not dead, he must die of the wound; and although he was exceedingly rejoiced at all this, yet he con-

doled with the lieutenant as much as if he had been his brother."

The news of the attack upon the lieutenant spreads through the city, and reaches the ears of Desdemona, who expresses the greatest concern for his misfortunes. The Moor draws from this the worst of inferences. He says to his ensign, "You must know that my simpleton of a wife is almost mad with sorrow for the lieutenant's accident." "How could it be otherwise," answers the ensign, "as he is her life and soul?" "How," cries the Moor, "her life and soul! I will separate her soul from her body. I should disgrace my manhood if I killed her not." They discuss whether she should be stabbed or poisoned. Presently the ensign suggests: "A method has occurred to me which would give you satisfaction and would excite no suspicion. The house in which you live is very old, and the ceiling is broken in many places. Desdemona might be beaten to death with a stocking full of sand, and no marks of this would remain on the body, and when she is dead we will pull down a part of the ceiling, and bruise your wife's head; then give out that a beam in falling has done this and killed her. If you follow this advice you will avoid all suspicion, and every one will believe that her death has been accidental." The Moor is pleased with this savage advice, and the diabolical plan is carried into execution. The ensign is concealed in a closet communicating with the bed-chamber of the Moor and Desdemona. According to his instructions, the ensign makes a noise in the closet. The Moor bids his wife get up and see what is the matter. Poor Desdemona obeys, but as she approaches the door of the closet the ensign rushes out, and with the stocking he had prepared for the purpose strikes her violently on the small of the back. She falls, scarcely able to breathe, but faintly calling upon the Moor to come to her assistance. He approaches, crying: "Most infamous woman, you now receive the just reward of your wickedness." The ensign strikes her a second blow. The poor woman, feeling her end to be nigh, then exclaims that since the justice of this world is denied her, she attests the Divine justice in favour of her honour and truth. The infamous ensign then strikes her a third time and completes the murder. The skull of the victim is broken; the dead body is placed in bed, and a portion of the ceiling is broken down. The Moor then

calls for help; the neighbours rush in and have no difficulty in believing that Desdemona had been killed by the fall of the ceiling. "Her life had been so virtuous that every one lamented her fate; and the following day she was buried, to the great sorrow of the whole island."

But Heaven does not leave the crime unpunished. The Moor, finding himself deprived of her whom he has loved more than his eyes, begins to regret her so extremely that he almost loses his senses, and goes about his house looking for his Desdemona in every room. The sight of the ensign, the cause of his crime and his suffering, becomes insupportable to him; he longs to slay the villain, but he fears "the strict and impartial justice of the Venetians." He degrades him from his commission, however, and expels him from his company. Hence there arises between the two the bitterest of enmity; and the ensign, "the greatest of all villains," now studies how he may be revenged upon the Moor. The lieutenant in the interval has partially recovered of his wound, and is able to limp about with the aid of a wooden leg. The ensign addresses him and persuades him to return to Venice, promising to inform him as to the attempt to assassinate him, and the cause of his losing his leg, and to bear witness for him in a court of justice. Arrived at Venice, the ensign reveals to the lieutenant the whole story of the jealousy of the Moor and its criminal results. The lieutenant lays the case before the Council, accusing the Moor of the crime he had committed, and adducing the evidence of the ensign. The Venetian magistrates have the Moor arrested in Cyprus and brought to Venice, where, by means of the torture, they endeavour to extract from him the truth. But the Moor is found to possess sufficient force and constancy of mind to endure the torture without confessing anything. He is thus enabled to escape the punishment of death; he undergoes a long imprisonment, and is subsequently condemned to perpetual exile. "He was afterwards killed, as he deserved to be, by his wife's relations."

Of the wicked ensign it is related that he returned to his country, wherever that may have been, and "still continuing his old practices" he accused one of his companions of attempting to murder a nobleman who was his enemy. The accused was arrested and put to the torture, when he so firmly denied the crime laid to his

charge, that in his turn his accuser was racked so very effectually that "his vitals were injured, and upon his being conducted home he died in great agony." It is pointed out in conclusion that thus "the divine vengeance was executed against those who had murdered the innocent Desdemona." The entire story is supposed to have been gathered from the circumstantial relation of the ensign's wife, made after his death, when, presumably, no further occasion existed for reserve upon her part.

Whence, it may be asked, did Shakespeare derive the name of Othello? It has been surmised that by Othello the Moor should be understood Otello Moro—a member of the Mori family, a Venetian house of ancient descent and dual rank. Cristoforo Moro, who served with distinction in the wars of his country, was Doge of Venice in 1462.

The names of Iago and Emilia occur, it has been noted, in the old romance of *Euordanus*, printed in 1605. Othello is supposed to have come upon the stage some years before. In *Euordanus*, Iago is the name given to the Prince of Saxony. It is probable that Shakespeare was acquainted with this work, and he may have seen it before it was published. But Iago, a foreign form of James, is really, as Mr. Carew Hazlitt points out, the same as Jago, still a common appellation in Cornwall.

GLIMPSES OF THE FEN COUNTRY.

IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

To visit the Fen country in summer, the best, and by far the most pleasant, mode of travelling is by boat; but the traveller must be well inured to the sun, for along these shadeless banks the heat is intense. From Cambridge to Ely, with the return journey, is a good day's pull, some twenty miles either way. The course of the river presents no unusual features beyond the ordinary fen landscapes, but here we start outside the great Fen Circle, as it were, and we can mark the gradual change of scenery.

At first, elms and ashes, willows and poplars, line the banks, and cluster in plantations forming cool shady avenues. Thinner and more sparsely scattered are the trees as we approach the flats, until at last, only where a cottage or a ferry appears, is the greenery enlivened by any vegetation sufficient to cast a shadow.

When the sun is bursting through the mists in a pale cloudless sky, and cool winds blow softly on the water; when the

turf is netted with long white films of silvery gossamer that sparkle under the slanting rays; when silence reigns over the still sleeping world save from the towers behind where all the bells are chiming through the summer air; then with a measured swirl of the dipping oars we glide smoothly along down-stream with the day before us. Past green slopes where, under the shadow of the elms, the cattle couch; past bright meadows, a golden blaze of buttercups all dashed with clover; on toward a straggling village, its red roofs nestling among the trees; and, as we pass the church, from the tall grey spire the melodious bells take up the echo of those we left behind with one short chime, that for a moment breaks the stillness and vibrates through the air.

At the ferry, where the village street slopes to the river, the ferryman sits, hardly awake, staring stolidly at us as we pass, and blinking at the low sun before him, then leisurely resumes his occupation, whatever it may have been. Now the shady towing-path follows each turn of the river with its endless line of pollard willows; and rising high behind, casting dark shadows far over the water, plantations of aspens sway and quiver in the breeze.

Delightfully cool and soft is the music above, murmuring in unison with the splash of the oars beneath. Here and there, where a cottage-garden slopes along the bank, the women with broad sun bonnets are already astir; a flash of hot colour from the climbing scarlet-runners, and a delicious whiff from the flowering beans, and we leave them behind. Other gardens show signs of taste and skill in the laying out. Smooth closely-cut sward, dotted here and there with daisies, edge the river. The pleasure-boat is moored hard by, and beyond we catch a glimpse between the stiff hedges of beech and yew, of a blaze of geraniums on the lawn, and the red gables and chimneys of the house beyond. Tall trees overshadow the water, and under the hawthorn shrubs patches of white and pink blossoms cling to the bank, shaken from the milky clusters by each breath of wind, and drifting slowly down the stream in long white trails. Over the lawn the wag-tails run swiftly in the early sun, and startled by our splash the blackbirds fly from every bush with loud harsh clatter.

Long shady reaches stretch in front, where the trees seem almost to meet over head; the high plantation on the one side, and the willows by the towing-path on

the other, in the narrowing perspective appear almost to touch. Under the plantation where the water below the bank forms dark green pools, the villagers tell of wondrous chub-holes; and legends of huge fish seen in these shadowy depths, which, however, seldom are brought to the light of day, are told to the stranger fisherman, who listens greedily, replying in hushed whispers as he watches the tiny green float bobbing along the ripples. Now there are gaps between the bordering trees, where meadows stretch far inland with farms and homesteads nestling in the distance. The towing-path ends abruptly where a gaudily-painted iron bridge spans the river, and the high fen banks appear enclosing it on both sides, with a goodly space of marshy ground between them and the water. Here the river flows lazily onward, by the lush grass, with patches of yellow iris to enliven the green. By reason of the low land on either side the river bed seems full to overflowing; even the wash of the oars, as it causes the rushes to sway, we expect to see sweep over the pasture. There is no shade now, the sun is blazing above and reflected in the calm water below, a disk of blinding, white that dazzles the eye as we look down stream; the only things to suggest coolness are the willow tops appearing above the flood bank, for the water itself seems lukewarm. The morning breezes have passed, and hardly a ripple stirs the surface, which we might deem a stagnant pool but for a leaf or blossom slowly floating down.

A white cottage in the distance, a long black line of posts stretching out in mid-channel dividing the stream, and the sound of a murmuring weir, give evidence that we are approaching a lock. From the cottage chimney blue smoke curls upwards, a visible token that someone is about, and after repeated halloas and calls of "Lock, lock!" a feeble old man appears hobbling leisurely along the bank toward us.

The necessary qualifications of lock-keepers would seem to be the art of never being at hand when wanted, slowness of movement, and general feebleness, added to which stone-deafness is almost indispensable. He stares at us individually, he stares at us collectively, then laconically asks, "Want to go through?" Receiving an answer in the affirmative, with some suggestions that he should bestir himself, he looks up stream, he looks down stream, scanning the river abstractedly, then turning, enquires again sharply, with some

visible gestures of impatience, "Du yer want to go through or don't yer?" and in despair we shout in chorus, which appears to have some effect, for laying down his boat-hook he proceeds leisurely to wind up the gates. But the wheels are stiff, and the old arms are feeble. With jerks and groans, inch by inch, the cogs bite along the bar, and the water gurgles through the aperture with tiny whirlpools, the boat begins to drift in its current, and we hold on by the tar-blistered posts and handfuls of reed, when suddenly a voice cries, "Git along wid yer, and hold the gentleman's boat." Meekly and slowly the veteran obeys his better-half, who, seizing the windlass with gaunt bare arms, winds up the gate without a pause, then stands with arms a-kimbo, surveys us for a moment, and enters into a shrill conversation in which the weather, the crops, the fishing prospects, and her own domestic affairs are somewhat mingled. The current grows less and less as the lock fills, and now we can see the water shining on the other side as it rises even with the river; then the gates slowly open, and we enter. As it closes behind us, the labour is repeated at the other end, where the bottom gate empties the lock to the level of the lower river. Slowly, slowly, we sink down as the water diminishes between the slimy walls where the water-beetles crawl over the brickwork, left high and dry by the subsiding element. On the tiny foot-bridge above, two youngsters with round red faces and shocks of hay-coloured hair gape down on the strangers, then rush, as soon as the water is even, to open the gates. We glide out from between the moist walls as fast as the feeble steps of the old gate-keeper will allow, whose grey-stockinged legs slowly swish through the grasses overhead. Now we are in mid-stream once more, and catching the force of the current from the weir, glide away into the wide Fen country. As we stand up, beyond the flood bank, far over the broad green plain distinct and grey rise the towers of Ely some ten miles across the fen; then, as we turn, the high banks shut out the view, rising nearly from the water's edge, purple with the luxuriant growth of common mallow, and patches of wild thyme fill the air with scent. Bees and brown butterflies are the only living creatures to be seen, except the cattle, some knee-deep in the grass that spreads above the water, while others, blinking in the sun, munch the herbage and regard us placidly. There is no

sound but the hum of insects or the whirr of a great dragon-fly as he darts along the stream, or the twitter of the swallows skimming and wheeling above the surface, dipping their white breasts with a low splash in the water. A gang of black barges appears in sight, the horses moving slowly along the bank, and the long haling-line dips in a curve over the low ground, where it brushes the herbage and rises again to the masthead. The distant halloo of the bargee is borne along the river, answered again by the driver, seated on the leading horse. As they approach the fence dividing the pastures he pulls up suddenly, the long line slackens, and drops beneath the water. Slipping to the ground with wild yells, he induces the horse to take the fence, who wavers for a moment, pausing with the huge hoofs raised, then gathering up its strength, rushes clumsily at the heavy timbers, and with a clatter of his fetlocks on the topmost bar, lands to all appearance not much the worse for the collision. Urged on at a trot the tow-line runs swiftly through the herbage, brushing from the meadowsweet white clouds of pollen, and tearing up the water in a long line of spray; then as it tightens it brings him to a sudden standstill on his haunches, the bargee once more resumes his seat, and they jog slowly on.

The dark black hulks glide by us, the water rippling around each prow; to steer clear of the haling-line is our chief object, and to avoid the nearer corner, where the last of the string hugs the bank, threatening to crush our boat between its huge planks and the land. Some chaff from the bargees is unavoidable; let it be good-humoured, and the bargee is the best fellow in the world. We have experienced more than once the hospitality of these independent gentry. Drenched and benighted on some lone fen river, a stranger is willingly offered all that barge hospitality can afford, and seated in the small dimly-lighted hold, every attention is paid to his wants, fresh-water fish are spluttering on the fire, a plate is produced from some corner, and, perhaps, a fork may be found; if not, ample apologies follow. These luxuries of modern civilisation are seldom in requisition, for the bargee is not fastidious in his eating. And all this is done in a purely hospitable spirit, without hinting at any recompense, although to be sure it is never refused; the true bargee is ever ready to drink a health at any hour and in any weather.

Perhaps no class of men has been so systematically abused as this. He has his faults; when roused he is a reckless, awkward customer; his language, even in his most placid moods, is open to criticism, although his words have no more meaning to him than strong superlatives to emphasise his opinions. Independent he is, especially when first accosted, and seems to regard every stranger with suspicion, but after a time this defiant tone wears down, and he is all civility, ready with any information he can give of the fishing merits of this or that lode or river, or to answer any questions relative to his profession. But the railways have ruined the river navigation — bricks, turf, and sedge generally form the cargoes carried from village to village, or from the fen to the more distant towns in the higher country.

The barges disappear and we are alone once more, gliding between rich pastures, some fresh mown, where the scent of the thick swathes fills the air; others, a brilliant green streaked with red lines of sorrel or blazing with buttercups, spared as yet from the sweeping scythes. Each cottage by the riverside has its low flat-bottomed punt moored close to the bank to cross the river, or does the journey lie downstream to some neighbour below, the waterway cuts short the long footpath by land, lengthened to twice the distance by the intersecting dykes. We pull up a moment where a road crosses the water as the huge grind slowly makes its way over, the chain grating and clanking round the wheel as the boy toils at the windlass, and the smock-coated carter soothes the restless horses, who seem hardly at home launched out in mid-stream. Then the heavy hoofs thunder over the boards as the animals disembark and make their way up the stony road to the whitewashed public shaded by a singing aspen. The indispensable geese gabbling around set up a shrill cackle at the approach of the fresh arrivals. We may follow them too. The landlady is all civility, mingled, however, with a touch of independence, a trait of character common to all Fen people — independence, indeed, that at times seems to turn into surly indifference. To our questions we may receive answers which lead us to the conclusion that the speaker's reasoning powers are at the best defective, or that he is amusing himself in his gruff way at our expense; but after some experiments with but slightly vary-

ing results, the former hypothesis seems to us the most likely and certainly the most charitable. But we are far from bringing this forward as an invariable type of the fen countryman. Rough and independent he always is, and, we must acknowledge, with a singularly vague idea of the length of a mile, and in a word somewhat dense; but we have generally found him civil, and the stolidity which he often displays must be regarded as part of his nature, and not as an intentional insult.

Embarking again, we continue our journey; the river flowing now in long reaches through a shadeless expanse of grass land. Before us, nearer and nearer, the little city grows more and more distinct; the grey cathedral stretches its vast length from east to west, with tower and lantern, transept and choir; the long ranges of windows blink and flash in the sunlight; and by buttress, parapet, and pinnacle the shades lie cool.

Every one knows Ely, nestling among or rather towering over the elms and chestnuts clustering on the southern side. Its grey bulk extends from east to west some five hundred feet or more. Each century of the middle ages has added something to the huge pile. The massive transepts of the eleventh, the long glorious nave of the twelfth, the matchless galilee and eastern choir of the purest age of English art; the soaring lantern, where the light streams down from its dizzy height to the pavement far below—all these have been described again and again. Dim and sleepily lie the shadows on the great grey tower, bathed in the sunlight, where, far above, the cawing jackdaws break the noonday stillness, wheeling round pinnacle and parapet; and below, where the tall arcades rise carved on the wall, from base and capital the pigeons coo, and the flutter of grey wings rustle languidly through the drowsy heat.

Grand is the panorama from the summit of the western tower, over all the great Fen plain; village and hamlet, tower and farm, dot the wide country where the river winds onward from the town beneath our feet, a silvery band now lost to sight, and flashing out again and again far on toward the blue horizon.

Perhaps the most beautiful view of the minster is from the river, where, as we follow it, winding round the city's base, we watch the great towers shift, the long nave lessen, pinnacle and turret appearing to meet in grand confusion. Passing the

tall east gable a little to the northward, the grouping is superb; it is then that we gain some idea of the immensity of the pile, which seems literally to overshadow the city below. Looking upward, the eye ascends from the water, where gabled houses, quays, and willows are mirrored in the sky; first the mass of buildings, rising steeply from the river, roof above roof, the lights and shadows softened by the haze of blue smoke that curls upward from every chimney; then over the scattered gables rise the grey walls, dark and shadowy below; but as the eye follows upward by buttress and lancet, the old stone angles are touched with light; higher still, where pinnacle and gable cut the sky-line, and the carved parapets stand delicate and clear, the strong light floods the broad stone surface and tips the sculptured crockets with its rays; and still higher, where the great lantern windows flash back the sun, its outline distinct against a tiny strip of sky to westward, where, from the foreshortened nave the huge bulk of the Norman tower overshadows all; then, as the perfect temple stands above us, we seem for one short moment to realise something of the sublime, and we turn away.

Softly falls the evening twilight as we return; dark olive shades are stealing beneath the banks where the willows crowd above, and far up the long straight reaches, dim with overhanging trees, the waters gleam a reflected light from the yellow sky. By the village quays the children are bathing, splashing, and paddling in the shallows, their voices ringing up the river. The swirl of our oars alone breaks the stillness, as they dip with a hollow splash, and the banks around grow more and more indistinct as the shadows deepen. Full in mid-stream, where the long line of gleaming light, stretching onward to the west, points out our path, through the warm summer night byshrouded orchards and old gardens, where the air is sweet; by clustering cottages, where here and there a bright light twinkles through the gloom; by homesteads, where the calves are bleating and the cut clover scents the night; homeward we glide.

And now our journey is over. With aching backs and sun-scorched arms we disembark, tired and weary, with our ideas of the Fen country somewhat confused, perhaps; visions of endless green meadows, wide skies with sunshine and water, floating vaguely through our brain and mingling fantastically in our dreams.

HERR CRAMBO.

A PSYCHOLOGICAL PHENOMENON.

IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

THE truth of the following narrative may be looked upon as sufficiently attested, I presume, when I have remarked that the main incident it relates fell within the scope of my own observation. It occurred in the midst of the first disasters of the great Franco-German War, when, in my twofold capacity as the special correspondent of *The London Flam* and *The Baltimore Advertiser*, I, Felix O'Flaherty, of Blatheremskate, in the County Down, was hanging on to the skirts alternately, now of one, now of another of the shifting armies of the belligerents. MacMahon had but recently fallen back upon the Moselle. The bombardment of Strasbourg had already begun. The Bavarians had crossed the Vosges. Napoleon was at Verdun.

The invaders were preparing, through the sanguinary conflicts which shortly afterwards took place within two days of each other at Courcelles and Vionville, for that terrible carnage at Gravelotte, which first awakened Bazaine to a recognition of the formidable possibility of his being completely isolated at Metz. My fifth despatch to either side of the Atlantic had ended, sensationally enough, with the Emperor's melancholy "*Tout peut se rétablir.*" Another, following hard upon its heels, took note of the King's emphatic declaration, that he warred not with French citizens but with French soldiers. A momentary doubt bewildered me as to which direction I ought next to take, whether I should follow towards Longeville the forces already advancing thither under Von Steinmetz, or pursue the course taken by the Red Prince, already, no doubt, meditating his sudden descent upon Mars-la-Tour. As it happened, I did neither. A casualty, in itself not in any way surprising under the circumstances, made me resolve upon resting one night at least before coming to a determination.

The sturdy little cob which for the last three days I had been bestriding, with only too brief intervals of repose—so desperately eager had been my quest of anything like reliable information—within an hour or two of sundown had suddenly fallen dead lame, just as I was about, with the utmost caution, to descend a rather steep by-road leading into one of the prettiest valleys I had yet seen in all my journeyings through Lorraine. The necessity for my making a halt as soon as possible became at once

apparent. And my conviction of this was not altogether unwelcome. For, if my poor toil-worn steed was jaded, I myself was literally dog-tired into the bargain. It was precisely at this moment, when, with tightened rein, I was, in the most gingerly way in the world, directing the steps of my nag to a piece of wayside grass, with the intention of dismounting for a few moments before pursuing my path to the level ground at the foot of the hill, that I became aware of what I had not previously noticed—the clattering approach of another horseman immediately in my rear. Just then a pebble or two, struck forward by the hoofs of his charger, shot past me in further token of his coming; and—what fairly startled me at the instant, it came upon me so unexpectedly—I in the same breath recognised the voice of one I had certainly not seen for a whole twelvemonth, but who, prior to that interval, had been about as familiar to me as my own shadow. Our recognition of one another, in point of fact, was nearly simultaneous.

"Pardon, m'sieur!" uttered in the shrill strident voice I so well knew, were the opening syllables evidently of some intended apology, which, on my half turning my head in amazement, was abruptly merged in an involuntary "*Mein Gott!*" an exclamation the next instant trailed off in a laugh that assuredly needed no translation into any articulate speech as a provocation to merriment. It was a laugh which I had always myself found to be irresistibly contagious, and which had ever appeared to me pre-eminently to befit one I had long come to regard as the very pink and pattern of a cosmopolite.

Another moment and it most certainly looked no laughing matter for either of us. A splintering shower of pebbles—a frantic scraping of hoofs—and we were both rolled in a jumble together on to the very bit of grass towards which, but a few seconds before, I had been directing my animal's steps so very cautiously. An unlucky turn of the head at that most inopportune juncture had thus, in the twinkling of an eye, brought me to grief; and this by reason of my sheer amazement on being accosted, when he was least in my thoughts, by my old friend and intimate in many a strange carouse and confabulation—Herr Crambo, travelling agent, as I always understood him to be, for the great Munich galleries of the Pinacothek.

When we had contrived to pick our lives together—he still laughing hilariously—we

had the satisfaction of finding not only that we were not one atom the worse for our tumble, but that our chargers, as a most careful examination proved soon afterwards, had by the rarest good fortune passed also scatheless through the same ordeal. Herr Crambo's quadruped—a big raw-boned brute, fitter as it seemed to me for the shafts of a cart than for the saddle—when we came to look about us was, with the calmest gravity, sitting up ridiculously upon its haunches, in heraldic phrase, *Sejant-regardant*. Mine, on the other hand, had rolled over so completely in his downfall—luckily for it, cushioned upon a portion of the turf where we ourselves lay sprawling—that, by reason no doubt of its being doubly prostrated by fatigue and by the accident, it remained there quite tranquilly upon its side until a little later on, when we were prepared for our departure. During the interval of our stay there, however, it never once offered to rise from its recumbent position, requiring at the last indeed some small persuasion to do so, and even, it must be said, some slight assistance.

Hearing beside me Herr Crambo's infectious cachinnation, seeing his preposterous cart-horse still squatting in front of us upon its haunches, and glancing next askance at my companion's always more or less ultra-grotesque appearance, I, too, though an instant before certainly in no laughing mood, took with zest my full share of enjoyment in the absurdity of our situation.

Herr Crambo, years before this, my comrade had called himself upon our first introduction. Herr Crambo I believed him to have been: one, that is to say, really German born and German bred. Nevertheless, though in all likelihood he had originally come into the world, as he himself stated, in the capital of Bavaria, no inhabitant of the three kingdoms would ever for a moment have dreamt—judging, that is, from his accent—of taking him for anything but an Englishman. To say that he spoke idiomatic English is to say nothing. Had you given an ear searchingly to his pronunciation, you would with confidence have declared, not only that he must have been born within the English seaboard, but that he must perforce have been a right-down Londoner. Although obviously more than five-and-fifty years of age, he had an elasticity beyond that of youth in his every movement. In two words, his gait was at once, as I may express it, dapper and spry. Below rather than above the ordi-

nary stature, he was so at the expense, as one may say, of his body, for he was long-limbed. In his very carriage—without meaning any play upon words—he seemed to go upon springs. Sitting or walking, running or riding, he appeared to be all knees and elbows. Persuasive in laughter and curiously shrill in voice, he peered at you through a pair of those cumbrous folding spectacles known as green goggles, which, perched astride upon a nose grotesquely hooked, were overshadowed by dark grizzly hair standing out all over his head in dishevelled prongs. Speaking of Herr Crambo from his general effect upon myself, I would say that he was altogether one of those oddities the mere sight of whom gives one somehow an instant sense of exhilaration.

"My dear fellow," he exclaimed immediately upon recovering sufficient breath and gravity to speak at all, "under the impression that you were a native of these parts, I was just now calling out to you to clear the way. Had I known it was yourself, it's the war-cry of you Patlanders I'd have given you—*Fagh na ballagh!*" As it is, let me change my greeting, now, to one just a shade more appropriate, to the true Irish all-hail—*Cead mille fealthe!*"

"Right glad is it I am myself to see you," was my reply; "more by token that I happen just now in a double way to be rather nonplussed."

Thereupon I explained to him my uncertainty as to my next movements, telling him of course at the same time of my twofold responsibility. While doing this, I referred also, as to a matter yet more urgently pressing itself upon my consideration, to the lamed condition of my unlucky quadruped.

"Pshaw! as to that," said Herr Crambo, pointing as he spoke to the off fore-foot of the cob, which still not only tranquilly reposed upon the herbage but was coolly munching the few blades of grass it had contrived to nibble at sideways, "only extricate from that tender frog the splinter I see there, and, after a good night's rest, both your steed and yourself, with no time lost, will be none the worse for tarrying down yonder until to-morrow."

In a few words he then explained to me that, no more than some thirty or forty yards beyond the point at which the precipitous road tapering down in perspective from where we lay, came seemingly to an abrupt termination (in reality turning sharply off to the left) there awaited us,

hidden from view by an intervening clump of chestnuts, what he extolled as something immeasurably better than the very model or paragon of a French cabaret.

Thither, in effect, it turned out that he himself had been wending his way—at a breakneck pace it must be allowed, considering the bold gradient of the declivity—when we had summarily cannoned against each other. Having compared notes a little further, and rested ourselves sufficiently, we contrived between us to extract from the hoof of the jaded cob the wedge of flint which had so instantly caught the keen glance of my companion. Immediately after this, each of us leading his steed rather ignominiously by the bridle, we slowly, but in the end without further casualty, conducted the two animals down the rest of the incline on foot. The level of the valley once reached, in a twinkling we were again in the saddle, and a few seconds afterwards drew rein at the porch of *Le Petit Caporal*.

The roadside tavern at which we alighted, as I very soon found, not only justified to the full, but far surpassed, Herr Crambo's eulogium upon its excellence. Picturesque without, it was all comfort within, and when Jean Baptiste, who upon the instant of our approach had clattered out from the stable-yard in his heavy sabots and with a straw in his mouth, had not merely conducted thither our two horses, but had shaken down for them in our presence a plentiful supply of fodder, we sauntered into the pleasantest *salle-à-manger* imaginable, with an anticipative relish of whatever repast might be in store for us beyond that capable of being excited by a remembrance of the daintiest sauce piquante anywhere described in the annals of gastronomy. Apart from the primitive valet d'écurie just now referred to, who in his rustic blouse followed us in with our compact baggage—Herr Crambo's well-stuffed saddle-bags, and my own small rusty valise—there appeared to be but one other person, the buxom little hostess, on the whole establishment. Happily for us that one important personage, with the aid always be it said gratefully of the ubiquitous Jean Baptiste, proved to be in every way sufficient. Thanks to her ready command of all the moderate resources of the cuisine at her disposal, we were soon seated at a little scratch repast worthy in its way of being called a dinner, notwithstanding its having been hurriedly scrambled together for us upon the spur of the moment.

Beginning with a potage (appetisingly sprinkled with mint and garnished with croûtons) that had evidently been simmering on the hob in provident readiness for any emergency; including among its asides the broiled débris of a chicken flavoured with button-mushrooms; and finishing off, after a delicious omelette au confiture d'abricots, with a honeycombed cube of surely the most flavourous Gruyère ever compacted from cream by a neat-handed dairymaid; it need hardly have been disdained even by a consummate gourmet—providing only, of course, that he had sat down to it, as we did, with that best seasoning of all, a ravenous appetite. What, no doubt, added very considerably indeed to our enjoyment of the simple fare thus promptly placed before us was the circumstance of its primitive arrangements, or rather, it might almost be said by preference, its no-arrangements—giving us, together with the excellence of the food, the sense as of a sort of in-door picnic. Throughout, save only when at intervals the dishes were brought in or removed, we were our own attendants.

"Don't you think," said Herr Crambo with a chuckle, as we unfolded our table-napkins, coarse in texture but smelling wholesomely of lavender, "that just before we (literally) stumbled upon one another, it can hardly be yet an hour ago, we might have been sketched as an appropriate vignette illustration to the opening sentence of one of G. P. R. James's forgotten novels? 'It was a beautiful evening in the August of 1870 when two travellers on horseback might have been seen descending with different degrees of caution—'

"Very different!" for the life of me I could not help interjecting.

"—a narrow hill-path in one of the most sequestered regions of Alsace-Lorraine."

"G. P. R. James's embellisher might have looked to our meeting just now, no doubt, to some purpose," was my reply, "had he been a caricaturist: yet hardly could he have done so had his thoughts been in harmony with the text of his author as a romancist."

"Well, as to that there may be two opinions, as, even by your own admission, you may find almost immediately," said Herr Crambo, with what seemed to me at the moment a wholly uncalled-for tone of significance. "For the present," he gaily cried, crossing the room knife in hand, and with a waiter-like flourish of his napkin, "I content myself"—carving, as he

spoke, a fresh slice from one of the long sticks of bread propped up in a corner of the apartment—"I content myself with another portion of this true staff of life."

It was only when our impromptu repast had been completed, down to the sipping of the *chasse café*, that I noticed anything like a recurrence on the part of my companion to what I have just now spoken of as observable in him especially—a somewhat unlooked-for tone of significance.

"My dear Felix," he then remarked, with a most unwonted gravity, "I look upon our seemingly chance encounter to-day as something more than merely fortuitous. Since we last met I have often thought wistfully of our conversation immediately before we parted. It may have slipped your remembrance; it has certainly not mine. And that it has not, as they say in the old plays—perpend. I have often thought of the bewilderment with which you must have regarded many things at which I then simply hinted. Now that we have met again thus surprisingly, in mere hints I want to speak to you no longer. My wanderings are, I feel, at last very nearly over. A week ago I crossed the Channel, never to return to England. Across the trail of this horrible war I was hurriedly wending my way homewards, bent upon settling down permanently in my birthplace, when we each came upon the other almost with the abruptness of a thunderbolt."

While speaking thus he had opened, with an air of abstraction, one of his brace of leathern saddle-bags. Taking from it, now that it was unlocked, however, with a manner expressive of half-serious, half-whimsical deliberation, a pocket-book, a pouch of tobacco, a substantial flask, and a German pipe, which last, I very well remembered—one of those long china bowls with the drooping blob of a receptacle for the essential oil, bowl and blob, each of them, most delicately painted, while the jasmine tube itself was festooned about by a silken cord and tassels—Herr Crambo added, with what appeared for the first time in my whole knowledge of him, something actually like suppressed emotion:

"Don't smile at me, my dear Felix, at anyrate derisively, if I say that, coming upon you as I have done, with such startling suddenness, and in what is for me so momentous a crisis in my life; nay, more, in the deathlike calm of the eddying core of this hideous hurly-burly whirlpool of

war, I want, now, in what will probably be our last meeting, to give you no longer any mere half-confidence, but to open my innermost thoughts to you completely. Driven to this, I am not ashamed to confess to you, though I should shrink from making the acknowledgment to anybody else, by what most people would scorn as a mere idle presentiment. But come," he added, "there is the loveliest greenery, as I very well remember, in the grounds at the back of this old tavern, the most charmingly-secluded corner of earth, surely, ever contrived for a confidential chat, where to our hearts' content we may confer together over our pipes without any risk of interruption."

"Have with you!" cried I, at the same moment producing my pet *meerschaum*. "And while we converse now again, as we have so often conversed before at the *Wrekin*, as the gods used on *Olympus*, in the midst of ambrosial clouds, if only we might for once, though it were but in some merely momentary and fragmentary way, be true to that noblest maxim of the *Smoker*, the one penned years ago, in one of his most sagely humorous moods, by the late Lord Lytton (have I not seen it inscribed over the mantelpiece of a grave Church of England clergyman? himself, needless to say, a consumer of the pungent weed): 'The man who smokes thinks like a sage, and acts like a Samaritan!'"

Carrying, each of us, by a wise provision, one of the tavern glasses for replenishment, when occasion required, from Herr Crambo's ample flask of strong waters, we then sallied forth together in the rear of the building; and, passing through a quaint old-fashioned garden, ablaze with autumn flowers, and having a grey old sun-dial in the midst, followed a tortuous path through a shrubbery until it led us abruptly, by a gap in a hedge, into a smooth-shorn spacious bowling-green completely walled round all its four sides by lofty and well-clipped holly. The glossy bowls, tumbled aside by the last players, were lying idly in one corner. A rustic seat or two, and a little table on gnarled legs, stood just within the entrance. Otherwise the scene inside the enclosure was one level blank of green, surrounded by the dense and impenetrable mass of the close-clipped frondage of the holly. The only place of egress was immediately at our backs when we were seated, namely, through the narrow gap by which we had just now entered.

Having brimmed, drained, and replenished our glasses in silence, and then filled and kindled our pipes with a sort of luxurious deliberation, we watched for a while, with seemingly no inclination to break the profound stillness, the grey wreaths and rings of the tobacco-smoke floating away into the sweet evening air.

Before, however, we have well got, as it were, into the marrow of our pipes, let me say here at once of my companion that, not only in his character and temperament, but in his personal habits and occupations, he had always appeared to me, among all the people I had ever met, the strangest and most fantastic mass of contradictions. He was at one and the same time, for example, a mystic and an athlete. With the windings of all the more crooked ways of philosophy, or, as it ought rather to be called, pseudo-philosophy, he appeared to be perfectly familiar; and, meanwhile, the relaxations he most delighted in were the calisthenics of the gymnasium. Alternately he seemed to give himself up with about equal zest to the enjoyment of the flying leaps of the trapeze, and to researches in what the majority regard as the all but forbidden arcana of the darker sciences; or, again, to employ the more accurate phrase, it ought rather to be said, of the mock sciences. Not a séance of any note had taken place in any of the capitals of Europe within the last twenty years, to my certain knowledge, without exciting in him the liveliest interest and curiosity. Every subtlest phase, every shadowy fluctuation in the development of the study of biology, had been tracked by him with the keenest, the most sleuthlike, and the most scrutinising observation. For one whose ostensible path in life was that alone of an art-critic or connoisseur, his knowledge of the least-recognised, and beyond all doubt the last-systematised, of the various departments of natural philosophy had appeared to me little less than portentous; had always, in fact, been a source to me of profound astonishment. As an electrician, during his earlier years in London, he had been the favourite pupil of Professor Faraday. As a mesmerist, he had taken high rank among the more intimate disciples of Dr. Elliottson. Latterly, in my uncertain intercourse with him, chiefly confined, by-the-way, to convivial meetings after night-fall, I had noticed, first of all with surprise, but afterwards with amusement, his growing delight, as it appeared to me, in everything in any way remarkable either

in mere manipulative skill or physical dexterity.

I have seen him again and again, for instance, watch with a kind of breathless exultation the leopard-like agility of Leotard; while the hairbreadth feats of Blondin—that man, as he has been well termed, with the brain of a chamois, and who is surely the ideal “balanced man” of Plato, seen at last veritably in the flesh—exercised in regard to Herr Crambo, as I have repeatedly had occasion to observe, a very glamour of fascination. When I had parted from him about a year previously, his time, during his leisure hours at least, seemed to me about equally divided between certain more than usually recondite researches in animal magnetism and a fantastic indulgence in the wildest kind of athletic exercises. To his ulterior design in all this he had at the time, as I now very clearly recall to recollection, made one or two rather mysterious but, as they appeared to me then, simply bewildering allusions. It was to this that he now reverted, as, after taking an eager draught from the glass at his elbow, he blew a long whiff of tobacco-smoke into the bright sunlight, and, as though he were just picking up the thread of our conversation of a twelvemonth before, precisely at the very point at which it had dropped, thus, without preamble resumed:

“A series of propositions, after all, will, perhaps, the most readily express my meaning. The argument which I have insisted upon throughout, as you cannot but remember—an argument the validity of which I have since verified by my own experience, and of the irrefragable truth of which I am now going to give you, here, ocular demonstration—was based at starting upon the indisputable fact that man, in himself, has two natures; meaning, of course, the material, or physical, and the immaterial, or metaphysical. You recollect?”

“Perfectly; but proceed.”

“Well, equally undeniable, obviously, is the fact that those two natures are together subdivisible into four parts, showing man, in his duplex character, to be compounded of body, life, mind, and feeling, the first-mentioned alone being material, the last three immaterial: man, consequently, in himself, being, in other words, by the proportion of three to one, immaterial.”

“Granted. Well?”

“There is next, of course, in denial of the fourth or fractional part of his entity,

that negation of the whole material universe, the chief assertor or propounder of which negation in his day was Bishop Berkeley."

"But then, as Lord Byron observed, more wisely even than wittily:

"When Bishop Berkeley said there was no matter, And proved it—'twas no matter what he said."

"Altogether apart, however, from that comprehensive unbelief as to the physical reality of anything in space," Herr Crambo continued, "there is, of course, that eminently self-sufficient or vain-glorious denial of everything but one's own existence, known philosophically by the term 'egoism'—David Hume, for one, going actually beyond the hardihood of egoism by a point-blank denial of his own existence. However this may be with the more sceptical, the truth is admitted on all hands among the most believing philosophers—reverting here for a moment to the original proposition with which I started—that while there is in man but one part material, there are three other parts that are immaterial. Remember, again, that what there is of a material or substantial kind in his structure, being in the proportion of but one of solid to nine or ten of fluid, is capable of being reduced by dessication to, as nearly as possible, the weight of his own skeleton, an adult of ten stone being reduceable to considerably less than a hundred and fifty ounces avoirdupois."

"But," I enquired, not a little puzzled, "pray let me ask, my dear Herr Crambo, to what, possibly, all this is pointing?"

"Your question is natural enough," he replied, "and, to answer it as rapidly as may be, I will condense what I have to add in the way of explanation into a series of propositions, the truth of each of which has long ago been admitted, they having, in fact, each of them in turn been proved to absolute demonstration. Now, to begin with one of the most elementary of these. No more than a superficial acquaintance with the merest rudiments of anatomy enables us to know perfectly well that what there is of substance in our anatomical construction is so fluent; is so variable in the mere loss and renewal which are perpetually going on in our entire system, by means of what has been called the metamorphosis of the tissues; that life is, indeed, with each of us, a shifting scene, even in our very selves. Could only the processes of expiration and assimilation, of waste and repair, that are taking place continually in every particle

of our frames be rendered apparent to our senses within view of one another, we should then instantly appear each to the other a mere circulating medium; we should find it next to impossible, in regard to a creature so perpetually renewed and vanishing, to acknowledge anything like a really stable or actually recognisable entity. You follow my meaning so far?"

"Surely," I acquiesced; "but, for the life of me, even now I cannot perceive, I cannot even conjecture to what purpose."

"Listen," continued Herr Crambo, with increased impressiveness. "You say 'for the life of you' you cannot, employing, in your eagerness, or in your emphasis, a phrase that is sufficiently familiar. But—what is life? According to Emanuel Kant's oracular utterance, it is simply 'an internal principle of action.' Terse, you will say, but vague, and therefore unsatisfactory as an explanation. According to Antoine Dugès's way of putting very nearly the same statement into slightly different words, life is defined as simply the special activity of organised beings, which takes us hardly a step farther in the onward direction. According to De Blainville's roundabout way of expressing it, again, life is describable as the 'twofold internal movement of composition and decomposition at once general and continuous.' Herbert Spencer, in an attempt to be more explicit, has, in our own time, contrived, with great ingenuity, to be just a trifle more enigmatical, where he pronounces life 'the definite combination of heterogeneous changes, both simultaneous and successive in correspondence'—these are his very words—'with external co-existences and sequences.' George Henry Lewes, in much fewer words, has said of life, more recently, and to my mind much more satisfactorily—for his compact phrase includes everything—that life, *pur et simple*, is 'the dynamical condition of the organism.'"

"Good," I said, not much enlightened. "Yet having said thus much, what is to follow?"

"This. Over and above life, there is mind, which is no other than the psychical aspect of life: mind being as truly the aggregation of the whole sensitive organism as life itself is the aggregation of the whole vital organism. Bringing the entire duplex organism into direct rapport with the external universe, there are, of course, the senses as five marvellous, but—even in a normal state of health—not

always reliable channels of communication; most certainly not reliable when in an abnormal condition of functional derangement. I will not stop here, however, to do more than point out in passing, that, apart altogether from the senses, there are a vast number of sensations coming under the category of what has been termed, for want of any better phrase, systemic consciousness, a class of phenomena which the enquirer last mentioned insists, with some show of reason, has been strangely neglected alike by psychologists and physiologists. Summing up what I have said so far, there is the living organism in its very sum and substance in a perpetual state of rapid change and transformation; there is the vital principle, which is the motive power of the whole complex machinery; there is the mind presiding over all, the secret self, the inner entity, giving this man among all other men his dominant independence or individuality."

"En avant! still say I; for even as yet you are doing no more than simply piquing my curiosity."

All this while we had, with an occasional sip at our glasses, been smoking industriously.

Herr Crambo, however, now laid down his pipe, and whipping off his green spectacles, which he placed upon the table between us, leant across and fixed his dark eyes searchingly upon me, thenceforth addressing himself to me with a hurried and almost breathless eagerness.

"You remember, no doubt," he said, "when we met a year ago in your vast wilderness of a metropolis—nay, you cannot fail to remember, even though I took courage only through a few disjointed sentences to accentuate what was until then our most confidential conversation—my telling you of certain athletic experiments I was at that time meditating and of certain weird researches, bolder than had ever before been adventured upon, which, as I hinted to you, I had already commenced in regard to animal magnetism, clairvoyance, mesmerism, call it what you will—mysterious influences anyhow which we, its esoteric employers, have dubbed od force, and which the exoteric multitude, spelling the symbolic term derisively with two d's, contemns superciliously as having given rise only to a certain odd philosophy. Many hitherto distinct and entirely isolated threads of knowledge I have during the interval which has since elapsed brought together and combined. Having said this,

I shall come now almost immediately to my demonstration."

From this point down to the startling close of our interview, the recollection of which in its minutest details haunts me yet like the most extravagant of nightmares, Herr Crambo's look, voice, manner, betrayed what appeared to me, in spite of all my experience of his profoundly excitable temperament, a wholly unparalleled blending in him of intensity and animation.

VISITED ON THE CHILDREN.

BY THEO GIFT.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER XVIII. DR. HAMILTON'S STORY CONTINUED.

"At first I could hardly believe my eyes; but when she said my name in a trembling whisper, and clung to me with hands as cold as ice, I knew that it was 'Blümchen' herself, and no vision; and dreading what might have happened, I drew her hurriedly into the study, closed the door, and asked her why she had come, and what was the matter. For all answer she pointed to the preparations for departure scattered about my room, and stammered out:

"It is true, then? You were going?' then, flinging herself at my feet, burst into a passion of weeping, and told me that she had only heard it that day. The principal had said I was leaving Brighton at once, and she (Blümchen) knew it was on her account, and so she had run away, and come to me to ask me to take her with me. If I loved her she loved me too. If I was poor, so was she. If I could not live happily away from her, away from me she should die. It was only I who had made life bearable to her when the desertion and cruelty of her brother and sister showed she had nothing more to hope for from them; and if I did not want her she would just go away and drown herself. But I did, did I not? I should be glad to have her, my little Blümchen, to wait on me, and work for me, and spend her life in making me happy? And then, still crouching at my feet, and grasping both my hands in her slender fingers, she lifted her young face to me with such a white, wild, impassioned glance as gave to even its fresh loveliness something of awe, as she waited for the rapturous answer she never doubted I would give. When she saw me instead turn pale, and begin a faltering

remonstrance, the brightness in her eyes faded out in a dull glare, her rosy lips blanched, and with a low cry: 'Oh God! you don't love me then!' she sank back upon the floor, and lay there prone and unconscious, as if dead.

"Mr. Ashleigh, you have condemned me, but think of my situation and be just. Here was this pretty young creature, the only being I had ever loved with anything approaching to passion, utterly alone in the world, utterly friendless, pleading with me and begging me to take her away, and showing in every quiver of her wasted little hands, in the feverish glitter of her sunken but beautiful eyes, what ravages even the last few weeks of sorrow and suspense had made in her; and here was I, the man who loved her, and whom she loved, already engaged to another, and so hampered in my profession, as you have seen, that to marry her would have been to sign my own ruin in any case. Yet even then, dragged one way and another as I was, tortured, tempted, and hardly able to know what was best or worst when there seemed nothing but blackness on every side, even then I would have resisted the Tempter's whisper to take her at her word if the first syllables she uttered on recovering from that terribly deathlike swoon had not cut the ground from under my feet, and silenced all my arguments in favour of her return to the establishment she had quitted. I was kneeling beside her, her head lying on my arm; and as her blue eyes opened on my agitated face, a faint little smile came into them, and she whispered:

"Have I been ill? How frightened and unhappy you look! But I was wicked, I remember. I said you did not love me, and you do. I knew you did. I left a letter for them at the school, saying I was gone to the only person who loved me, and then I came here and waited—ah! so long—till I saw the lights go out of your kitchen and up to the attics. I said to myself then, 'Now the servants will be gone to bed, and he will be alone.' I was afraid of them, lest they should tell the principal where I was, and have me taken back; but now you will not let them. We will go away together, and if they find it out after we are married, no one shall blame you. I will say it was I who made you do it, and that, if you had not taken me, I should have gone straight down to that black, windy sea there, which is always moan, moan, moaning through the nights

when my cough won't let me sleep, and put my head under it. I should not be afraid of that. Louis does not care for me, and the girls are horrible at that place. I would rather die than go back to them.'

"And I believe on my soul that she meant it, and that even if I had seen her safely within the doors of the school, she would have gone down to that very sea next morning and drowned herself. If you here had seen the look in her face that night you would have felt the same. And I loved her!

"One effort I made.

"'Oh Blümchen,' I said, 'I do love you. You know it too well, child, and it is wicked of you to talk of drowning yourself. But what can I do? I am heavily in debt as it is. I could not even afford to keep you as you have been kept. I cannot marry—'

"She interrupted me with a little gay laugh:

"'No, not yet, I know, but we can wait; and meanwhile I will be your little servant or your sister. I can do such a lot of things for you, and I shall not cost you anything. See here! These will get plenty of money to buy me food and clothes, and I eat so little, you can't think. At that school which looks so fine they nearly starve us. When I first went there I often used to cry, I felt so hungry at night; but now I am never hungry.' And she drew out an old velvet bag from her pocket, and untying it showed me first a quaint necklace set with emeralds, then a couple of rings, pearl and diamond, and three or four other trinkets, all more or less valuable, which she told me had been her mother's, but which I could take and sell for our joint benefit.

"What could I do? I had never seen such a combination of utterly childish innocence and womanly passion in my life; and already the night was getting on. They were probably searching for her already. If she were found with me, I should be simply destroyed. If I took her back it would be just as bad; for I had seen for myself how recklessly imprudent she was, and in her misery she would be almost sure to betray herself and me too. In my mind's eye I even seemed to see the horrible little paragraph in the Brighton papers: 'Elopement from a fashionable girls' school. Strange revelations about a certain popular young surgeon;' and I shuddered at the vision and at the certain downfall of every hope of carrying out my

almost completed partnership with Dr. Forceps Brown if the story got about. Scorn me if you will. I was a coward, and I own it; but I was not a villain, for I could not have wronged the child who trusted in me with such innocent, loving confidence, though not even for the sake of that love could I dare disgrace, beggary, and the mocking triumph of rivals whom I had supplanted, or brave the despair and anguish in her eyes if I were to tell her I was engaged to another woman. And yet all through it I loved her, in my way, so dearly. I had little time for deliberation. The great thing for the time was to get her out of the house to some place of safety before the servants were astir in the morning. They were only two—an old woman and the page-boy; and I had noticed that the former was in the habit of leaving her bonnet and cloak hanging on the kitchen-door downstairs. When Amy was rested and well refreshed with food and wine (I had told her part of my plan, and she was quite bright and happy), I dressed her up in these things, managing by the aid of a pair of spectacles, a green gauze veil, and sundry wraps, to give her quite the look of a dowdy old woman. Then I wrote a letter to a person at New Cross, which I gave her, and we left the house together. There was a train from Brighton at ten minutes past six, which reached London at half-past eight, and in that train Amy Dysart left Brighton. I had walked with her almost to the station (in the darkness of a winter's morning there was no fear of anyone recognising me) and heard her pretty voice mimicking the cracked tones of an old woman asking for her ticket to London Bridge. Then the train went off, and I returned home, let myself in as noiselessly as I had gone out, and, after making a few arrangements below, went quietly to bed. Twenty minutes later I was noisily aroused by my old woman knocking at the door and vowing that thieves had been in the house during the night, for that on going downstairs a few minutes back she had found the kitchen-widow open, and my silver cruet-stand, as well as her own bonnet, shawl, and hand-bag, gone. That hand-bag contained Amy's hat and scarf, and a few other things to enable her, on getting to London, to resume her original appearance in the waiting-room at New Cross. Of course I made a great fuss, threw on my clothes in wild haste, and then rushed off, nominally to the police-

station, but really to a distant telegraph-office, whence I telegraphed to the person at New Cross that my sister was coming up to town for medical advice, and that as I was unable to follow her for a day or two, I had sent the child to her lodgings, and trusted she would receive all care and attention. I did not use my own name, but one which I had taken when up in London once in my student-days, and by which this person had known me; and after that I went home and pursued my daily avocations as usual, even finding time to visit my sick German and ask him laughingly how the Fräulein and her young friend were, and whether they would be interrupting us to-day.

"Of course there was a great hubbub about Miss Dysart's disappearance for the first day or two. Enquiries were made by the police, and an advertisement put in the paper, and even now I wonder that no suspicion ever attached to me. I believe that in the beginning one person, Fräulein Bertha, had some, for she came to my house and told me of her pupil's disappearance, weeping profusely, and looking narrowly at me, as if to see if I showed any sign of being guilty of it, but I manifested such lively horror and anger at the news, accused her so roundly of being the cause of the affair by taking the child to low places, and threatened to acquaint the principal with all I knew of her conduct unless she could swear to me that she had neither introduced Miss Dysart to anyone, nor been otherwise accessory to her elopement, that the woman was thoroughly frightened, and ended by piteous entreaties that I would shield her and hold my tongue as to ever having seen the girl except at school.

"Perhaps, however, my best security was in the fact that I was there, on the spot, visible to everyone, paying farewell visits all round, and announcing for the first time my approaching marriage to Miss Vane—a thing in itself enough to disarm suspicion; but indeed the school was so thoroughly bad at core and so mismanaged, that I think the heads of it were more anxious to hush up the affair than make it unpleasantly public by a too active enquiry for the missing girl.

"In this way four days passed, and then, and not till then, I went quietly up to Surbiton, saw my new partner, and two hours later was at New Cross. I expected to find Amy by that time a good deal subdued, perhaps (now that the first excite-

ment of her adventure was over) rather frightened and penitent, and not unwilling to listen to my entreaties to her to write to her brother, telling him how miserable she had been at school, a statement I would promise to confirm as her medical adviser; and, if he sent for her back, to go home to him, at any rate for a year or two till she was older, and I (deceptive phrase!) better able to marry.

"This was my plan; but, alas for its success, I was met at the door by my old landlady telling me that the poor young miss was very ill—she had broken a blood-vessel the previous night; and only for my letter saying I was coming I should have been telegraphed for. Ah me! before an hour was out I knew more than she could have told me, and not of my own knowledge only, but that of the local doctor for whom she had sent beforehand. The insidious disease, which had seemed only in its infancy when I attended her at the school, had made fearful strides the last two months, and Dr. — only confirmed my own opinion when, laying down his stethoscope in the outer room, he said to me:

"A hopeless case! The lungs almost gone already. She may live through the winter; but I doubt it. Get her out of London at once, and to some warm place; give her plenty of nourishing food and keep her from fretting or worry, and you may prolong her life a little, and ease the last weeks of it, but not the cleverest doctor in the world could save it, poor child! She must die."

"And this was my one love, my sweet-heart, Blümchen! From that moment, Mr. Ashleigh, all thought of sending the poor child back to the school where she had been so neglected, or the home whence she had been driven, went from me at once and for ever, as did any lingering temptation that I might have had to deal unfairly with the innocence that had confided in me. She was mine. Of her own will she had given herself to me, without one thought of evil in her childishly ignorant mind. And I accepted the gift as a sacred trust, and vowed before Heaven to reverence it, and care for her as though she had been indeed the sister I represented her. As soon as she could be moved I took her down to Ventnor, engaged a kind old woman as her nurse, and established them in the warmest and prettiest lodgings I could find, with the understanding that she was still to pass as my sister, and that I was to run down to

see her as often as I could, and write to her every other day.

"One other precaution I took. The servant I had engaged for her could not read; and I told Amy that, as the other doctor had said any excitement was very bad for her, she must promise me not to look at a sensational novel, or a newspaper of any sort, till I gave her leave. She was as docile as a lamb with me, and promised at once; and by that promise I guarded against her seeing any advertisements which her family might choose to insert in the papers for her; and still more against the announcement of my marriage whenever it might appear.

"For I married Miss Vane very shortly afterwards, and we took up our residence in Surbiton. Thanks to my wife's fortune, my embarrassments had been removed very early in the day; and even from the commencement I seemed to become so popular here, and we were so sought after, that Dr. Brown told me before long that he thought his patients were getting fonder of the new doctor than of the old one.

"Meanwhile, by the invention of a story about an old patient who was dying of a painful disease, and who would trust in no one but me, I continued to visit Amy at Ventnor every five or six days; and never without taking her a fresh supply of books, music, or dainties, while I surrounded her with every luxury that she could wish for to make the times of my absences pass more bearably.

"She was wonderfully patient, poor child! The rapid growth of her illness had taken all the petulance and impatience out of her nature; and, secure in the possession of my love, surrounded with every evidence of it, she was more than content, and rested happily in the belief that when she was well, and it was 'safe' for me to send for her, she could come back to me and we would be married.

"To the day of her death she never knew or suspected that I had a wife already. Had she done so, I believe she would have died on the spot; but I deceived her in that, and in that alone.

"I deceived my wife far more and in many ways. If you ask me whence the money came to maintain Amy Dysart and purchase all the presents and pretty things I lavished on her, I answer plainly, from my wife's funds, or the funds which should have been hers. With the natural generosity of a loving woman she had taken pains to give me all the power over them

that she could; and I used it in the way I have said. Since then I have paid back into her name nearly double the sums so spent; but that does not lessen the meanness of the deed, nor alter the fact that, while every day of our married life showed me more of her worth, and proved how well suited she was in every way to make a perfect wife to a far better man than myself, the very consciousness of the double life I was leading gave my manner to her a certain coldness and reserve which naturally hurt her pride and repressed the tenderness she would fain have shown me, while all my loving words, my gaiety and fondness, I kept for the sick girl who day by day was fading gently but fast into the other world.

"She died just as the summer was coming on. I had brought her back to London with the first warm days that I might be able to see her oftener, and had established her in a pretty furnished cottage in St. John's Wood, which I hired from a friend who was leaving England for a few months. I said it was for a lady patient; and if the servants put us down as closer connections I did not care. They were from Devonshire, and though she still went by the name of Miss Hamilton, they altered it as often as not to 'Mrs.,' and I believe chose to regard us as a run-away couple, and to fancy it was my anxiety to keep the marriage a secret which made me only pay my wife such flying visits. What the other doctors thought whose aid I called in I did not enquire. They could do nothing for her; nor could I. Her doom was sealed from the beginning.

"The end came quite suddenly. She broke a second blood-vessel; and the telegram sent to apprise me of it found me away from home and fell into my wife's hands. It was written by one of the servants, and the wording confirmed the suspicions which, it seems, Mrs. Hamilton had for some weeks begun to entertain. She sent it on to me at once, and then followed me to town, and, unknown to me, was present at the death of the poor child who, however innocently, had robbed her of the love which she, as my wife, had a right to consider her own.

"Of what passed on my return home on that most miserable day there is no need to say much. I would even then have told my wife the plain facts of the story whose final chapter she had seen; but she refused to listen to me, and I cannot blame

her. Appearances were too much against me, and I had deceived her too grievously, for her to credit that I was innocent of the grosser unfaithfulness to her of which she believed me guilty. 'I owe it to her generosity indeed that she did not yield to her first impulse of demanding a separation and exposing the whole affair. That she refrained from doing so was entirely owing to her knowledge that such action on her part must lead to her husband's total ruin, and the disgrace of a name which she had made her own. She consented after some time to condone her wrongs, on condition that I never made any allusion to them or the past by word or hint; and from that day our life resumed its old outward appearance. How different it was in reality only God and we two can ever know!

"Three months later, when our first baby was born, I did indeed trust that matters might mend. My sorrow for the dead girl, who, dear as she was and still is to me, was but a child after all, had softened by degrees, as my respect and affection for the woman—who was not only my wife but the mother of my child, and whose silent suffering touched my heart more than any reproaches—steadily increased. I tried hard then to bring about a fuller reconciliation between us; but it was not to be; as, instead of the link between us which I trusted the babe to prove, my wife saw in it only a special gift sent to her from Providence as a substitute in the place of that which had been taken from her. It was painful to her even to see me touch the child; and she was so ill at the time that I respected her feeling about it and ceased to argue the question, leaving it to her to reopen when time should have softened her resentment. Of my subsequent life I need say nothing, save that, if I sinned as a man, I have suffered as a man, and sorely; but my sin was against the lady sitting here and listening to me—not the dead child long ago laid to rest in her quiet grave. With regard to Amy Dysart I hold myself guiltless even now, save of the folly of that early flirtation while I looked on her only as the nameless young concert-singer. You, of course, as a clergyman, will say I should not have played at love-making with her then; and of course you will be right. But if most young men had no worse follies on their consciences, I, as an elderly one at present, should not hold them very criminal.

"For that, however, as for her early

death, it was in truth her sister-in-law, not I, who was accountable. A victim to hereditary consumption, and far too frail to bear this climate, she would have died at the miserable school to which she was banished, even if she had not met a sadder fate. All the difference that I made in it was that for sorrow and loneliness I gave her love and care, for scanty food and fireless rooms every luxury which could keep the flagging life within her veins, for utter neglect and unkindness the most careful, tender protection. I never saw a sad look on her face during the last eight months of her life, except when she alluded to her brother; and her letters, still preserved, are one constant joy-bell of thankfulness for the happiness I had brought to her. I have nothing more to say, and only this to give you." He went to a small cabinet, and unlocking it took out the bag he had described, labelled, "For Amy and Jenny Dysart."

"These are her jewels," he said. "She left them to her baby-nieces, to be given them after their mother's death, or their marriage. You have told me of the former, so I make them over to you. Please convey them to their young owners, and believe that I regret almost as much as you can the trouble which, through this old wrong-doing, has fallen on the name-sake of her who was the first sufferer by it. And now, Mr. Ashleigh, I have detained you a long time. Don't let me do so any longer. I am here, as you know, whenever you wish to communicate with me, and you can make any use you please of the confession I have made to you."

"I have no desire to make any at all," said Lionel. He had taken up his hat, but, glancing at Mrs. Hamilton, and meeting the almost sick anxiety in her eyes, he paused, and held out his hand with a sudden, frank gesture to the doctor: "To spread this story abroad at present could do no good to anyone, and would only give much pain to Mrs. Dysart's daughters. Of that lady's bitter remorse for the part she played towards her young sister-in-law I have been a witness, and for yourself, Dr. Hamilton, though I cannot—excuse

me for saying so—hold you entirely guiltless, even by your own story, towards Amy Dysart, I agree with you that it is your wife whom your weakness with regard to that poor girl has most injured; and that, if she is silent through her love for you, I most certainly have no right to say anything."

He bowed gravely to the lady as he spoke and went away, the doctor seeing him to the door. When the latter came back to the study after a few minutes, however, he more than half expected to find his wife gone, and was surprised to find her still there, standing by the table, with one hand resting heavily on it for support, and her dark eyes, heavy with unshed tears, fixed on him with a kind of dumb, painful entreaty as he entered. The colour came into his face, and he went up to her and put his hand on her arm, saying gently:

"You are tired, Helen. This has been too much for you. Hadn't you better rest?"

It was the old kindly voice which no aggravation had ever been able to harden, the old kindly look on the worn, handsome face, the lines in which seemed to show more sharply to her in that moment than they had ever done before. He was very near her just then, her cheek almost brushed his shoulder, and with a sudden, yearning impulse of wifehood, oversweeping and overpowering all the long-nourished sense of wrong and treachery, all the bitter crust of pride with which for years she had been fencing in her aching heart, she let her head droop upon his breast and clasped her arms round his neck, whispering the one word, "Forgive!"

"Forgive you?" said the doctor hoarsely. "My poor wife, do you think I don't know how you have suffered, or that the wrong I did you is no less for being an old one? But, my dear, we, too, are getting old now, and the little ones upstairs are suffering also through us. In Heaven's name, and for their sake, let there be peace between us. My love has been waiting for you any time these dozen years. Is it too late, wife, for you to care to try it?" and then he took her to his heart and kissed her.

There were no more words needed.

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